

Dealing With Anxiety

Foundations of Mental Health

Understanding Mental Health

Mental health refers to a person's emotional and psychological well-being which helps them cope with the stressors of life.

Our mental health is closely interconnected with the health of our relationships, which are shaped by three foundational elements: **community, vulnerability, and boundaries**.

Community

God designed us for community, evident in Genesis 2 and emphasized in the New Testament, particularly in 1 Corinthians 12, illustrating believers as unique parts of Christ's body, highlighting the essential nature of communal connections for our mental well-being.

Vulnerability

How do you find the sweet spot of vulnerability?

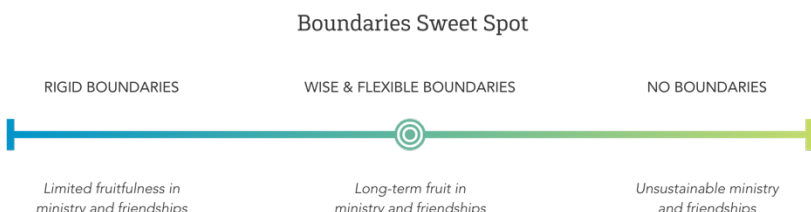
- Take it one step at a time.
- Avoid the temptation to dump out your whole life story.



Boundaries

Tips for setting boundaries:

- Ask someone
- Do some research
- Start in less stressful
- Learn to say yes and no



Anxiety

This course will cover the 3 A's – Avoid Less, Accept More, Attach Better – a tool to help reduce and manage anxiety.

Avoid Less

Neuroscience

Avoiding situations that trigger anxiety might offer short-term relief, but contributes to long-term anxiety because it reinforces the brain's perception of a genuine threat, leading to increased anxiety over time.

Social Skills

Growing our social skills can help us practically pursue deeper relationships that can improve our mental health and reduce our anxiety. Enhance your social skills by role-playing different scenarios and responses, creating a go-to question list, and debriefing social encounters with others.

COACH'S CORNER

Two critical notes:

1. We are not here to diagnose you.
2. We'll be referring to prayer frequently, but we are in no way saying, "you just need to pray more and you won't have anxiety."

Gradual Exposure

Gradual Exposure is a proactive strategy that involves facing fears step-by-step to retrain the brain and break the cycle of avoidance. This approach, incorporating relaxation techniques, aims to foster a realistic understanding of anxieties and create opportunities for spiritual growth.

Accept More

Repeated Reassurance Seeking

Our innate need to belong to a community drives us to seek approval and avoid rejection. Repeated reassurance seeking, driven by anxiety around acceptance, becomes a detrimental cycle, offering temporary relief but ultimately reinforcing and exacerbating anxiety over time.

Breaking the Cycle with Acceptance

Repeated reassurance seeking, akin to avoidance, communicates to the brain that there's a persistent cause for concern, fueling anxiety. The dopamine-driven cycle of reassurance seeking not only intensifies anxiety but also diminishes motivation. The antidote is acceptance, as seen in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and seeking God's approval over others'.

Paul and Jesus Prayer

This prayer structure reflects how Paul and Jesus prayed and the Serenity Prayer:

1. Please: God, if this is your will, take this away
2. Yes: If not, help me to accept
3. Thank You: Finish with gratitude

THE SERENITY PRAYER

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

Trauma

Anxiety often stems from past traumatic experiences, creating distorted mental models that trigger anxiety when recalled. While these models are challenging to change, therapeutic approaches, such as trauma therapy and inner healing prayer, offer opportunities to rework these mental patterns by connecting with truth and replacing false beliefs.

Attach Better

Attachment Theory

Types of Attachment Styles	
Secure Attachment When caregivers consistently meet a child's needs, adults with secure attachment feel safe and confident in relationships, trusting others.	Anxious Attachment Inconsistent caregiver nurture leads to adults feeling insecure, worrying about abandonment or lack of love.
Avoidant Attachment Caregivers dismissing a child's emotional needs results in adults favoring independence, keeping others at a distance.	Disordered Attachment Stemming from abusive or chaotic environments, this attachment style poses challenges in forming healthy relationships in adulthood.

The Power of Attunement

Attunement is the process of deeply connecting with another person, where you feel genuinely seen, heard, and understood.

Attunement, crucial for secure attachments in human relationships and with God, involves conveying messages like "I see you and hear you," fostering security and trust.

Develop a Secure Base with God

The common advice to "just trust God" often falls short in addressing anxiety because it targets the logical part of the brain, while anxiety stems from the emotional part. A more effective approach involves engaging in regular, meaningful prayer that reshapes the emotional brain, fostering a secure attachment with God and providing comfort and reassurance. Practical steps to deepen this connection include spending significant time in prayer, sharing feelings with God, and experiencing his provision regularly.

What to Do Now?

Social Media

To address anxiety related to social media, it's crucial to be mindful of repeated reassurance seeking and jealousy triggered by comparison.

Tips for managing your social media habits:

- Avoid repeated reassurance seeking
- Avoid scrolling
- Set a time limit
- Delete social media apps from your phone
- Try a social media detox

Medication and Therapy

Therapy provides a valuable avenue for emotional healing and mental health support, allowing individuals to discuss and process challenges in a relational context. Medication can be a beneficial tool, without shame, in managing mental health, offering effective support, especially when prescribed under professional guidance, and it's crucial to consult with a doctor before making any changes to medication.

Self-Cares

Self-care is like your mental and emotional gym routine. It is crucial for mental health, reducing stress, enhancing emotional resilience, and self-awareness. Prioritizing foundational self-care practices, including adequate sleep, regular exercise, healthy eating, and social interactions.

Leading Others

Key strategies for effectively coaching and leading others in their mental health journey include building rapport, being a curious listener, taking gentle initiative, and understanding your limits.

Strategies for rapport-building:

- Engage with open curiosity
- Listen without judgment
- Enhance your listening skills
- Maintain confidentiality

Strategies for effective listening:

- Pay attention
- Be fully present
- Avoid judgments
- Show active engagement

In emergencies, **call 911** and then contact the **Emergency Risk Hotline (608) 443-3705**. Save this number for quick access.

Related Resources

- [12 Reasons to Drink More Water \(article\)](#)
- [Boundaries](#) by Cloud and Townsend
- [Daring Greatly](#) by Brene Brown
- [How Much Sleep Do You Need? \(article\)](#)
- [Restless Devices](#) by Felicia Wu Song
- [Sleep, nutrition and exercise: your mental health's best friends \(article\)](#)
- [What is Self-Care and Why is it Important For You? \(article\)](#)

Recommended Courses

- [Depending on the Spirit](#)
- [Growing Authentic Community](#)

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